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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 47 DECEMBER 1, 2008

INSIDE

Pathfinder Press president speaks at Venezuela book fair

—PAGE 8

Workers hit with more layoffs, cuts worldwide

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Layoffs, wage cuts, and reductions in social services continue to spread around the world as the capitalist economic crisis deepens. In some cases, workers are resisting the attacks.

Mining companies "are shuttering operations and firing thousands of workers across South Africa, Australia, Canada, and Russia," reported the *Wall Street Journal* November 17. Tin smelters across Indonesia, where nearly 25 percent of the world's tin is made, are halting production.

Layoffs are rapidly mounting in South Africa. Some 71,000 jobs were eliminated in the third quarter, reported the South African newspaper *Business Day.* In mid-November Uranium One, a Canada-based company with mines in South Africa, said it would lay off more than 1,000 workers. The National Union of Metalworkers reported General Motors SA is cutting 2,000 employees there before the end of the year. Meanwhile,

Continued on page 11

Socialist in L.A. begins campaign for mayor

BY WENDY LYONS

LOS ANGELES—The Socialist Workers Party announced it is running James Harris, a meat packer and member of Local 770 of the United Food and Commercial Workers, for mayor of Los Angeles.

Campaign supporters completed a petitioning effort November 15, collecting 1,015 signatures in a week. The city requires 500 registered voters to sign nominating petitions, but socialist campaigners took a goal of doubling that to be in the strongest position to fight any attempt to deny the party ballot status.

Vibiana Melchor, 21, a student at Pasadena Community College, signed the petition at the Ralph's supermarket and subscribed to the *Militant* newspaper. "I don't believe the Democrats or Republicans bring very much to the table," she said. "They seem to be forgetting about us working people."

Harris, 60, is a long-time leader of the SWP. He is running against incumbent mayor Antonio Villaraigosa of

Continued on page 3

2,000 in N.Y. protest killing of immigrant

County measures encouraged attacks

El Diario-La Prensa/Manny Patiño

Protesters at vigil November 14 in Patchogue, New York, demand justice for Ecuadoran immigrant Marcelo Lucero, who was stabbed to death in a racist attack by a gang a week earlier.

BY CINDY JAQUITH

PATCHOGUE, New York—More than 2,000 people turned out for a candlelight vigil November 14 to demand justice for Ecuadoran immigrant Marcelo Lucero, who was stabbed to death here in a racist anti-immigrant lynching by a gang of youth November 8. Seven local high school students have been arrested for the crime.

Lucero, 38, worked as a presser at a dry cleaning shop. Construction workers, landscapers, janitors, and day laborers, along with their families, converged for the vigil on the spot where he was murdered. Most were Ecuadoran, but some U.S.-born residents of the area joined them, as did immigrant rights activists. Protesters also came from New York City, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Simultaneously, residents in Lucero's hometown of Gualaceo, Ecuador, also gathered, some listening to the speeches here

Continued on page 4

Venezuelan publisher launches booklet on U.S. class struggle

BY PATRICK BROWN

CARACAS, Venezuela—"We have hope—not an illusion, fantasy, or dream, but soundly based hope—that an organized people can achieve a revolution," said Carolina Alvarez.

Alvarez was speaking November 14 at a presentation during the Venezuela International Book Fair on the pamphlet *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* The pamphlet answers "yes" to the question posed in its title. "I believe that is an important message," said Alvarez, editorial director of the Venezuelan publishing house Monte Avila. A Spanish-language edition of the pamphlet has been published by Monte Avila for distribution in Venezuela and 1,000 copies of a special printing of it were distributed free to book fair participants.

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible? addresses the topic that was debated by more than 20 speakers during the Central Forum at the 2007 Venezuela book fair. That rolling discussion spanned several days. The pamphlet is based on the contribution of Pathfinder

Continued on page 9

1 week to go in 'Militant' drive to win readers

BY ANGEL LARISCY

With one week to go about 400 subscriptions are needed in the campaign to win 2,400 new and long-term readers to the *Militant.* Supporters of the socialist weekly are stepping up teams to campuses, working-class communities, and political events, as well as calling

Continued on page 3

Also Inside:

N.Y. students discuss gov't frame-up cases 2

Japanese from Latin America demand redress from U.S. gov't 3

Thousands in Uruguay rally for abortion rights 4

Court upholds U.S. gov't restrictions on study in Cuba 5

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

The Crisis Has Barely Begun!

... and workers' fight to end the wages system is posed

Jack Barnes

National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party

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N.Y. students discuss 3 gov't frame-up cases

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK—Supporters of Troy Davis, Syed Fahad Hashmi, and five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. jails spoke about these frame-up cases to 35 students attending a meeting at Hunter College November 13.

The event, titled "Oppose Attacks on Democratic Rights!" was cosponsored by the Muslim Student Association and the Young Socialists.

Alice Stark, a volunteer with the New York City chapter of Amnesty International, walked through the details of the frame-up of Davis, who is Black and has been on death row in Georgia since 1991 when he was 21 years old. He was accused of killing an off-duty Savannah, Georgia, cop in August 1989. Seven of nine witnesses have recanted, including at least two who said they were pressured by the cops to finger Davis, said Stark, yet the courts have refused to grant him a new trial.

On three different occasions worldwide protests were successful in winning three stays of scheduled execution of Davis, Stark said. The United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Atlanta issued the most recent stay while it decides whether or not to grant Davis a new hearing.

"Fahad is my younger brother," Faisal Hashmi told the meeting. "He was a community organizer from a Muslim perspective, unapologetic in his belief in his religion."

After graduating from Brooklyn College in 2003, Fahad Hashmi moved to England to study at London Metropolitan University. While there an acquaintance stayed at his apartment. The government claims that this person stored luggage with ponchos and socks at Hashmi's apartment that was later given to al-Qaeda.

"They charged my brother with material support to terrorism," Hashmi said. "They put him in solitary confinement and for the past 18 months have not even allowed him to receive books."

Martín Koppel, a staff volunteer with the *Militant* newspaper, spoke about the case of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González, who were arrested in 1998 on frame-up charges of "conspiracy to commit espionage." They are known internationally as the Cuban Five.

"These are not solely Muslim issues, or immigrant issues, or Black rights and racism issues," Koppel explained. "These frame-up cases and

Continued on page 4

Militant/Seth Galinsky

Panel discussion at Hunter College in Manhattan on fight for democratic rights. From left to right: Martín Koppel, *Militant* newspaper; Alice Stark, Amnesty International; Faisal Hashmi, Muslim Student Association (MSA); and Faisal Rusho, MSA president.

Syrian gov't seeks talks with Washington, Tel Aviv

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Since U.S. helicopters attacked a Syrian village near the Iraqi border October 26, killing eight, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad continues to pursue accommodation with Washington, and through that, with Israel.

Syrian information officer Mohsen Bilal stated November 5 that he hoped the election of Barack Obama as U.S. president would "change U.S. foreign policy from a policy of war and siege to one of diplomacy and dialogue." Obama has already sent adviser Robert Malley to meet with Syrian government officials, according to an article by Michael Rubin of the conservative American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

In recent months, there have been high-level talks between Syria and several imperialist powers.

French president Nicholas Sarkozy went to Damascus in September to discuss, among other matters, renewing negotiations between Syria and Israel. U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice met with her Syrian counterpart, Walid Moallem, two months ago. British foreign secretary David Miliband arrived in Syria November 17 for talks with President al-Assad.

Washington has long claimed the Syrian regime allows al-Qaeda fighters to operate on its territory and to enter Iraq through its borders.

Under pressure from the Bush administration Damascus has reduced al-Qaeda infiltration into Iraq from Syria since 2003. U.S. officials estimate al-Qaeda crossings into Iraq have fallen by 80 percent in the last year, according to a *Time* magazine report.

The U.S. raid October 26 killed a leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq but also several Syrian construction workers, provoking anger among working people. Al-Assad permitted some protest demonstrations, a rarity in a country that has been under martial law since 1963. But the only punitive measure the regime took against the U.S. government was to expel all foreign employees of the American Language Center and the American Cultural Center.

Damascus and Tel Aviv opened negotiations in May. Israel had bombed a site in Syria said to be a nuclear facility in September 2007. The talks were broken off this year when Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert announced his resignation due to corruption charges.

Al-Assad reportedly wants the talks to be brokered by Washington and is waiting to resume them when the Obama administration takes office.

The Syrian regime's main goal is Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which have been occupied by Tel Aviv since 1967. The Israeli government wants Damascus to end its support for the Palestinian group Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon and to break its ties to the government of Iran.

Meanwhile, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan—who brought together Tel Aviv and Damascus for their most recent round of negotiations—has volunteered to mediate talks between Washington and Tehran.

The Iranian regime of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sent a letter congratulating Obama on his election, the first such letter to be sent by Tehran since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Asked at a news conference about the letter, Obama replied, "Iran's development of a nuclear weapon I believe is unacceptable. We have to mount an international effort to prevent that from happening."

THE MILITANT

Legacy of imperialism in Congo

The 'Militant' explains the real history of colonialism in Congo and how UN troops in Africa today continue to serve the interests of Washington and other imperialist powers. Don't miss a single issue!

UN troops in Congo June 2008

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Socialist for L.A. mayor

Continued from front page

the Democratic Party and more than a dozen other candidates. The Republican Party is not running anyone against him in this formally "nonpartisan" election.

Harris addressed the deepening economic crisis facing working people at a meeting of supporters celebrating the successful completion of the petition campaign. Official unemployment in the Los Angeles area is 7.9 percent and it is estimated that 200,000 Californians will run out of unemployment benefits by the end of the year.

The economic crisis will force many workers "to think and act differently than most of us ever thought we would," said Harris. "We will learn to see that economic problems such as getting a job, low pay, paying the rent, homelessness, and affording health care and education are not just personal problems, but they are problems we face as a class. And we will have to learn to face them as a class.

"Working people will have to learn how to build unions that can fight in our interests, that the Democratic and Republican parties cannot and will not represent us, and that working people need our own political party that can enter the political arena fighting for us."

The SWP candidate pointed to the way in which the financial crisis is affecting the pensions of workers, from the decline in the value of 401(k)s to the crisis facing the California Public Employees' Retirement System, known as Calpers. The nation's largest public pension fund, Calpers recently lost 35 percent of its value due to investments in real estate.

"My campaign is pointing to the need for working people to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class, which has nothing but catastrophe in store for us through the workings of their system," said Harris. "If I am elected mayor of Los Angeles the first thing I will do is propose legislation to shorten the workweek with no cut in take-home pay and launch a massive program of public works at union-scale wages to build homes, schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and public transportation. I will also propose emergency legislation to halt home foreclosures."

The 1.5 million people who ride the buses and trains each day in Los Angeles County could soon face serious cuts in service and fare hikes, said Harris. AIG, the giant insurance company that was granted federal bailout money, has a huge interest in the trains and buses in the area. It provided $1 billion in loans to finance a scheme where the transit agencies sold buses and trains to investors and then leased them back. AIG also collected fees from the transit authorities to "insure" that the investors' lease payments would be paid on time. Now that AIG's credit ratings are down, the transit authorities have to find a new firm to guarantee the deals or rapidly reimburse investors.

Militant/Arlene Rubinstein

James Harris, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, participates in Los Angeles rally against Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage.

Harris and campaign supporters participated in a demonstration of 12,000 at City Hall earlier in the day to protest the passage of Proposition 8 in the November elections. Proposition 8 changed the California constitution to deny the right of couples of the same sex to marry.

A statement distributed by the socialist campaign said, "The unity of workers and those who fight for social justice can be the most powerful weapon we have in confronting growing unemployment and home foreclosures, as well as Washington's continued wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the surrounding region. Proposition 8 promotes division and opens the door to increased violent attacks against gays."

The statement pointed to the example set by immigrant workers and their allies who "successfully pushed back reactionary legislation aimed at victimizing them and making them a permanent second-class section of society when they marched in their millions on May Day 2006."

'Militant' drive, final week

Continued from front page

readers to urge them to renew their subscriptions.

Promoters of the paper in Montreal ordered extra copies to sell at the November 22–24 Salon du Livre book fair in that city.

In Twin Cities, socialist workers have been building a November 19 meeting at the University of Minnesota on *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.* In the last three weeks, 15 subscriptions to the socialist press have been sold at literature tables helping to build the meeting, reports Rollande Girard.

Distributors of the *Militant* in Newark, New Jersey, sold 17 subscriptions going door-to-door in predominantly Black working-class communities over the November 15–16 weekend. They are organizing more teams during the week and on Sunday, November 23. Workers are interested in discussing how to confront the effects of the deepening economic crisis and want to read a paper that explains the struggles and fights worldwide to combat its impact.

Carole Lesnick writes that five subscriptions were sold to carpenters in San Francisco who recently won a victory against the bosses' attempt to block their right to protest unsafe working conditions. *Militant* supporters in San Francisco sold six subscriptions at a protest against passage of Proposition 8, which denies couples of the same sex the right to marry in California. Seattle and Philadelphia supporters of the paper found a good response at similar actions in their cities, selling six and three subscriptions, respectively.

Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, the final chart for the subscription drive will appear in issue number 49. All subscriptions received by Monday, December 1, will be counted in the final tally.

'Militant' Subscription Drive
Fall 2008 ♦ Sept. 27 – Nov. 23
Week 7 of 8

Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Miami	**160**	**151**	**94%**
Houston*	**100**	**93**	**93%**
Seattle	**80**	**74**	**93%**
Twin Cities, MN**	**155**	**142**	**92%**
Newark, NJ	**125**	**111**	**89%**
San Francisco	**140**	**124**	**89%**
Philadelphia	90	76	84%
Atlanta	250	208	83%
Des Moines, IA	125	104	83%
Boston	60	48	80%
Los Angeles	100	80	80%
New York	315	253	80%
Chicago	100	76	76%
Washington, D.C.	95	72	76%
Other		8	
U.S. Total	1,895	1,620	85%
CANADA	125	82	66%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	**40**	**42**	**105%**
London	**80**	**75**	**94%**
UK Total	**120**	**117**	**98%**
NEW ZEALAND*	**85**	**82**	**96%**
AUSTRALIA*	**65**	**58**	**89%**
SWEDEN*	35	29	83%
Int'l Totals	**2,325**	**1,988**	**86%**
Should be	**2,400**	**2,100**	**88%**

* Raised quota **Raised quota twice

Japanese from Latin America demand redress from U.S. gov't

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LOS ANGELES—The U.S. government organized the abduction and incarceration during World War II of nearly 2,300 Japanese living in Latin America. Their fight for justice was discussed at a program held at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on November 13. The program was hosted by the Campaign for Justice: Redress Now for Japanese Latin Americans and by Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress. Campus sponsors included the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, Asian American Studies Department, Chicano/a Studies Center, and Nikkei Student Union.

Art Shibayama was 13 when U.S. soldiers came to his home in Callao, Peru, and arrested his father in March 1944. "My family was put on a U.S. military transport ship with other Japanese Peruvian families," Shibayama told the 35 participants in the meeting. "Twenty-one days later we were in Crystal City, Texas, in a concentration camp. We were brought here at gunpoint but they called us illegal aliens," he said.

Like Shibayama, Hector Watanabe was incarcerated in Crystal City. "Our civil rights were violated. Why did the Japanese emigrate to Peru? For work—they were not guilty of any crimes. We were hostages," Watanabe told the meeting. In addition to being incarcerated along with 112,000 people of Japanese descent living in the United States, Japanese Latin Americans were shipped to Japan as part of an exchange for U. S. prisoners of war.

As in the United States, authorities in Peru took control of bank accounts, businesses, and homes of Japanese Latin Americans. "My family's business and its bank accounts were seized by the Peruvian government," said Watanabe. The Peruvian government refused to let Shibayama, Watanabe, and hundreds of other Japanese Peruvians return after World War II.

"To get out of the camp, you needed a sponsor. So I went to work for Seabrook Farms, a frozen food company, working rotating shifts 12 hours a day," said Shibayama. In 1944, Seabrook Farms began recruiting Japanese Americans and those from Latin America imprisoned in U.S. concentration camps to work in its southern New Jersey plant, employing 3,000 Japanese as farm and factory workers.

Shigueru Tsuha, a graduate student at University of California, Riverside and an activist in the Campaign for Justice, urged participants to join the effort to win justice for Japanese Latin Americans. "This is connected to the fight for immigrant rights, which the U.S. government has a history of violating. When we win, it will be a victory for all of us and help educate about a living history," he explained.

The Campaign for Justice is fighting for the passage of the "Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act." Most Japanese Latin Americans were excluded from the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which awarded $20,000 and a letter of apology to Japanese Americans interned during World War II. In 1998 the Department of Justice gave about 600 Japanese Latin Americans a token $5,000 settlement.

Thousands in Uruguay rally for abortion rights

BY DOUG NELSON

A few thousand people, mostly young women, converged on the Plaza de Cagancha in Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, November 14 to protest President Tabaré Vázquez's veto the day before of a bill decriminalizing abortion.

The Sexual and Reproductive Health law, which allows women to have an abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, passed the Senate November 11 by a vote of 17 out of 30.

A week earlier, the Chamber of Representatives passed the bill by a one-vote margin.

Catholic bishops in Uruguay threatened to excommunicate any legislator who voted for the bill. About 47 percent of the population is Catholic.

In Uruguay abortion is illegal, although not punishable in cases of rape or when the mother's life is in danger. President Vázquez, a longtime leader of the Socialist Party, made clear as far back as 2005 when he was elected president on the Broad Front ticket that he supports a total ban on abortions. The Broad Front is a coalition that includes, among others, the Socialist, Communist, and Christian Democratic parties.

Six Broad Front national legislators took part in the November 14 protest.

The Uruguayan president said he opposed the law on the basis that life begins at conception and that the law would bring more abortions, as it has in other countries where abortion laws were relaxed.

According to a recent poll in the country, 63 percent oppose the president's veto.

Women's rights activists in Uruguay have been fighting for abortion rights since the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, explained Lilian Abracinskas, executive coordinator of CNS Mujeres, the women's rights coalition that organized the protest. "The demand began with the feminist organizations and has become a popular demand of the citizenry," she told the *Militant.*

"We have been explaining that access to abortion is a question of public health," Abracinskas said. "People with resources have access, while those without resources don't. But they should have access so it can be done under sanitary conditions. It's also a question of democracy and human rights, of reproductive and sexual rights."

An estimated 33,000 abortions are performed each year in Uruguay, a country of less than 3.5 million, according to government figures. Other sources estimate the real figure is more than double that.

The General Assembly has 30 days to overturn the veto by a three-fifths majority vote—60 out of 99 in the Chamber of Representatives and 19 of 30 in the Senate.

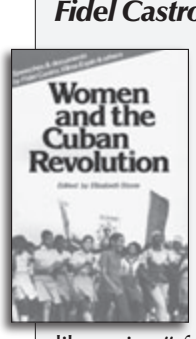
Of all countries in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, only Cuba allows abortions without restriction, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights. The government of Guyana allows unrestricted abortions for up to eight weeks. Most countries in the region allow abortion only in cases of rape or when the mother's life is in danger.

The governments of Chile, El Salvador, and Nicaragua recently made abortion a punishable crime in all cases, including when necessary to save the mother's life. Two other countries in the region, Haiti and Honduras, have had total bans on abortion for some time.

CNS Mujeres

Protest at Plaza de Cagancha in Montevideo, Uruguay, November 14 against veto by President Tabaré Vázquez of bill to decriminalize abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Women and the Cuban Revolution
Fidel Castro, Vilma Espín, others



Central leaders of the Cuban Revolution present the road forward in the fight for the emancipation of women. The revolutionary victory, said Fidel Castro in 1966, "has meant a double liberation" for women, "who were discriminated against not only as workers but also as women."

—$16

Abortion Is a Woman's Right!
By Pat Grogan

Why abortion rights are central not only to the fight for the emancipation of women, but to forging a united and fighting labor movement. *(Also available in Spanish)*

—$5

www.pathfinderpress.com

2,000 in N.Y. protest killing of immigrant

Continued from front page

via cell phone.

Patchogue is located in Suffolk County, Long Island, notorious for the anti-immigrant policies of government officials. Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, a Democrat, has pushed through laws barring landlords from renting to workers without papers, contractors from hiring employees who do not have work authorization, and restrictions on where day laborers may gather to seek work. Levy initially told *Newsday* that Lucero's killing was getting blown out of proportion because the media wanted to slander his administration. In any other county, he said, the murder would be "a one-day story." He later had to apologize.

At the vigil many people waved signs calling for "*Justicia para Marcelo*" (Justice for Marcelo). One man held a sign saying, "Not a one-day story." An Ecuadoran stood on the roof of a house with a huge sign reading, "Crimes of hate in Suffolk are the fruits of Steve Levy."

The government's attacks on immigrant workers has emboldened rightist forces in this county. In 2000 two day laborers were offered a job in the nearby town of Farmingville and taken to an isolated location where two racists beat them within inches of their lives. In 2003 a Mexican family's home in Farmingville was firebombed.

Fernando Lucero, no relation to Marcelo, works as a framer in construction. Interviewed at the vigil, he said immigrants are frequently subject to verbal harassment on the streets.

Rafael, a landscaper from Ecuador who asked that his full name not be used, said that landlords charge immigrants who can't produce documents hundreds of dollars more for rent. The housing is filthy, he added. His tiny daughter pulled at his sleeve and yelled, "Tell her about the rats!"

"Anything you try to do is a problem," Rafael said, "buying a car, going to the hospital." The bosses also abuse undocumented immigrants. He has worked for the same company for three years and has never gotten a raise. Rafael does not receive overtime pay regardless of how many hours he puts in. "We need a union," he said.

Armando, an unemployed construction worker from Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, came to the vigil on a bus organized by several Ecuadoran groups. He is active in Proyecto de Trabajadores Latinoamericanos (Latin American Workers Project). Many undocumented workers, he said, are not even paid minimum wage.

The lynching of Lucero "is outrageous," said Elbidio Molina, who came with 20 other janitors belonging to Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union. A fellow union member in the delegation added that "being African American, we've been through this."

A broad speakers platform at the vigil reflected the deep opposition the killing has provoked. A young construction worker, and member of the glaziers union in Manhattan, spoke about the abuses immigrant workers face in that industry and the importance of labor solidarity with them. Arturo Vilches from the Workplace Project addressed the crowd, noting the refusal of many employers to provide medical care to immigrant workers injured on the job. Daphne Irizarry of the Long Island Teachers Association and Lucius Ware, representing the East Long Island NAACP, also spoke.

Lucero's brother Joselo and a host of Ecuadoran organizations addressed the rally. The Ecuadoran consul-general has called for prosecutors to upgrade charges against Jeffrey Conroy, accused of stabbing Lucero, from first-degree manslaughter as a hate crime to second-degree murder. The other six youth are charged with gang assault.

New York State Senate minority leader Malcolm Smith spoke, urging "swift action against those that committed this crime." Patchogue mayor Paul Pontieri also appeared. As he started speaking many workers chanted "*Justicia!*" and "*Criminales!*" (Criminals). Pontieri sought to dampen the crowd's militancy, saying, "Yes, it's true this is for justice. But we also have to see ourselves as a community."

The Long Island Immigrant Alliance has called for another demonstration at the Suffolk County legislature building in nearby Hauppauge December 2.

Students discuss frame-ups

Continued from page 2

attacks on democratic rights are a threat to all working people."

"The case of the Cuban Five is an example of how the government assaults the rights of working people," Koppel said. "The FBI spied on them for years, tapped their phones, broke into their homes, recorded their conversations, seized personal correspondence, and took files from their computers.

"During the trial the government presented secret evidence that they refused to allow the defense to see," Koppel stated.

After the five were convicted "they were dispersed to five different federal prisons across the country and, like Fahad, when they were first arrested they were placed in solitary confinement, but the attempt to break their spirits failed," Koppel said.

The frame-up cases along with other attacks on workers rights, such as the Patriot Act, the death penalty, and immigration raids, have been carried out with the support of both the Democrats and Republicans, he noted.

Koppel encouraged students to join the "resistance and protests that have already begun to the growing economic crisis of capitalism," along with speaking out against the frame-ups of Davis, Hashmi, and the Cuban Five.

Teamsters strike trucking company in Northwest

BY EDWIN FRUIT

AUBURN, Washington—Some 600 truckers, members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, have been on strike since September 22 against Oak Harbor Freight Lines. The strike is at terminals in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

The union has filed unfair labor practices charges against the company, saying it used "intimidation" to influence workers to accept its contract terms. The union has been working under a pact that expired in September 2007.

Company spokesman Mike Hobby denied the unfair practices charges, saying Oak Harbor Trucking would use employees who choose to work and replacement employees where necessary, reported the *Portland Business Journal*.

According to the Seattle *Post Intelligencer*, Hobby said that 177 of the strikers had returned to work. Dan Jurpik, who has worked for 14-and-a-half years at Oak Harbor, said the union counts 70 workers or so at the 17 terminals who have crossed the picket line of the 578 on strike. According to the union, if the National Labor Relations Board rules in the union's favor all the striking workers will have to be rehired.

Workers on the picket line at the company's main terminal here said some of the issues to be resolved in a new contract include termination of retirees' health benefits and whether the workers should remain in the Teamsters' sponsored medical plan.

Workers have been following scabs to where they are making pickups or deliveries and picketing the Oak Harbor drivers. Replacement drivers are being supplied by Modern Staffing and Security.

On October 21, supporters of the strike unfurled a huge banner on the face of a building of the Gap headquarters in San Francisco. It said, "Don't Harbor Oak Harbor's Retiree's Abuses." The trucking company transports merchandise for the Gap on the West Coast.

Militant/Dean Peoples

Teamsters picket Oak Harbor Freight Lines terminal in Auburn, Washington, November 5.

Moroccan fights 'terror' frame-up in Canada

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL—Adil Charkaoui, an immigrant from Morocco living in Canada, is fighting an attempt by Ottawa to deport him.

He is one of five Muslim men jailed for years and threatened with deportation under a federal immigration "security certificate." This legislation allows indefinite detention of "terror suspects" who don't hold Canadian citizenship.

"Today it's me, tomorrow it could be you," Charkaoui told 60 students at an October 27 public forum at McGill University. Currently released on bail under stringent conditions, Charkaoui showed the audience the GPS tracking bracelet he is forced to wear.

Charkaoui has lived in Canada since emigrating from Morocco in 1995. In May 2003 he was arrested on his way to the University of Montreal where he was studying for a master's degree. With great media fanfare he was declared a threat to national security and jailed for almost two years, while the government began proceedings to deport him.

In February 2005, a public campaign led by his family resulted in his release on bail. But he is still threatened with deportation.

"The Canadian Security Intelligence Service applied its profile of an al-Qaeda sleeper agent to me," he said. "If you are an Arab, young, married with kids, have a university degree, and have traveled, you fit its profile."

"CSIS has never asked me about what I did, only about what I think," he said.

Charkaoui has denied any connection with terrorists and has demanded he face specific charges and be given a fair trial. Under the security-certificate section of the immigration law, no charges are required and all proceedings are held in secret. Charkaoui and the other men facing deportation do not have the right to see any of the "evidence" used to back up the certificate.

"I have learned that behind the beautiful phrases about Canada and Canadian justice there is hypocrisy," he said. "The racial profiling used against me is the same mentality used by police in Montreal North." A Latino youth was shot and killed by police there recently, triggering community protests and police repression.

Charkaoui reported he has the support of the Quebec Federation of Labor, Confederation of National Trade Unions, several New Democratic Party and Bloc Québécois members of Parliament, and civil liberties organizations.

He urged those present to get out the truth about his fight and the fight to abolish the security-certificate law. For more information, visit www.adilinfo.org.

Court upholds U.S. restrictions on study in Cuba

BY SETH GALINSKY

Upholding a component of Washington's travel ban against Cuba, a U.S. appeals court rejected a lawsuit November 4 challenging federal regulations that restrict study by U.S. residents in Cuba.

The restrictions, issued in 2004 as part of a tightening of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, make it illegal to study in Cuba unless the class program is at least 10 weeks long.

The federal regulations also limit licenses for study programs in Cuba to institutions issuing graduate or undergraduate degrees. Students must be enrolled full-time and only in programs offered by the school they attend in the United States. The rules require that those teaching the courses be full-time professors.

Prior to 2004, hundreds of U.S. universities organized short courses between semesters, making it possible for students to study in Cuba without adjusting their regular course programs. Today, because of the rules, only a handful of schools offer study-abroad programs in Cuba. They include the University of North Carolina, Harvard University, American University, and Sarah Lawrence College.

The Emergency Coalition to Defend Educational Travel, which represents some 400 professors, filed a lawsuit in 2006 challenging the guidelines as a violation of academic freedom.

In its ruling the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit stated that the U.S. government has the right to pursue a goal of "nudging Cuba toward a peaceful transition from the oppressive policies of the Castro regime to a free and democratic society." It insisted the federal restrictions were "content neutral" and that preventing students from choosing to study in Cuba did not violate academic freedom.

The court noted that no university joined the lawsuit against the rules.

In a November 7 telephone interview, Wayne Smith, a professor of Latin American studies at Johns Hopkins University and one of the plaintiffs in the suit, said, "The case is quite simple. They changed the rules. Until 2004 we could take people down for intersession courses and it worked very well.

"The government claimed there had been 'flagrant' abuse, that people were going down to Cuba to spend money and that had nothing to do with academic freedom," Smith said.

"The federal court did not look at the fact that there had been no abuses. It said: if the government thinks these rules are important then that's all there is to it."

Félix Masud-Piloto, history professor at DePaul University in Chicago, said in a November 10 phone interview that "some members of the DePaul faculty had lectured at the University of Havana. We had a group of about 30 students ready to go to Cuba again when the new rules were implemented. The course had to be called off."

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THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

December 2, 1983

Since the smashing of PATCO, the air traffic controllers' union, by the federal government in 1981, there has been an obvious, indeed urgent, need for solidarity with workers whose unions are under attack by the corporate owners and their government.

The strike forced by Greyhound Corp. on its 12,700 workers who belong to the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) is a well-prepared and deadly union-busting assault on yet another major union in the transportation industry. Under the guise of federal "deregulation," transportation workers have been forced to make huge concessions in wages and working conditions to increase their employers' profits.

Clearly, Greyhound chairman John Teets underestimated their determination to fight for their dignity.

December 1, 1958

The personal tragedies that follow the economic swings of capitalism are many.

But when union men and women, in the absence of a militant union leadership, begin to fight each other for jobs, the tragedy is compounded. This is happening in one of the most powerful unions in the country, the United Steel Workers of America.

Demanding that older workers retire, members of Local 1187 carried signs that read, "We got you your pensions—why don't you retire?"

There is an answer to unemployment. The demand for a shorter work week with no reduction in pay could spread work among all the men who need and want jobs. If the union officials do not organize for such a struggle, the union movement will not survive.

November 25, 1933

New York—The Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union is laying the necessary machinery to cope with any emergency that the Hotel Men's Association and the Restaurant Men's Association are trying to force through the NRA [National Recovery Administration], which only plays a scabbing role against the food workers.

On November 16, the local compliance board of the NRA ruled that the waiters' wages must be abolished and the gratuities of the public should be considered a sufficient amount of money to cover the $15 weekly minimum for waiters.

Our Union protested vigorously against this infamous ruling and succeeded in forcing the local NRA to rescind their former decision.

Behind prison bars, Cuban 5 proud of defending revolution

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

(Fifth in a series)

An article in last week's issue gave biographical sketches of Gerardo Hernández and Antonio Guerrero, two of the five Cuban revolutionaries who for 10 years have been unjustly held in U.S. jails. The five men, arrested by the FBI in 1998 and convicted on frame-up charges ranging from "conspiracy to commit espionage" to "conspiracy to commit murder," are currently serving long sentences in five different federal prisons. The following outlines the story of who the other three working-class fighters are and what they have accomplished.

Ramón Labañino Salazar

Labañino, 45, was born into a peasant family in Marianao, Havana Province, on June 9, 1963. His mother Nereida was involved in support activities for the Rebel Army in the eastern province of Oriente during the revolutionary war.

A student leader in high school, he studied at the University of Havana, graduating as an economist. He also studied at the university's military school. In 1987 Labañino joined the Union of Young Communists. The next year he took up duties as an officer of the Ministry of the Interior. In 1991 he joined the Cuban Communist Party, in which he held leadership responsibilities.

A sports enthusiast, he practices karate and as a student took part in the All-Caribbean Games. He is married to Elizabeth Palmeiro, and has three daughters: Ailí, 20; Laura, 16; and Lizbeth, 12.

As with his four imprisoned comrades, when Labañino moved to the United States in the early 1990s, he could not tell close family members about his assignment, not even when in 1998 he visited his critically ill mother, knowing he wouldn't see her again. His father, Holmes Labañino, said, "I never knew of the work he was doing. He never talked to me about it and I never asked. Since he was very young he has always known what to do and has always done the right thing."

Labañino told the courtroom on the day of his sentencing, "I will wear the prison uniform with the same honor and pride with which a soldier wears his most prized insignia. This has been a political trial; therefore, we are political prisoners."

Labañino is serving a sentence of life plus 18 years. Jailed for many years in Beaumont, Texas, he is now locked up at the McCreary federal prison in Pine Knot, Kentucky.

Ramón Labañino (center) with two fellow prisoners in federal prison.

Fernando González Llort

González, 45, was born in Havana on Aug. 18, 1963. He was a student leader in high school and college, as well as in the Union of Young Communists. He graduated with honors from the Raúl Roa García Higher Institute of International Relations.

González volunteered as a combatant in Angola from 1987 to 1989. He was part of a tank battalion when Cuban and Angolan troops defeated the South African apartheid regime's invading forces at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. For his role in combat he was awarded the medals "Internationalist Combatant" and "For the Victory of Cuba—People's Republic of Angola." In 1988, during his tour of duty in Angola, he was taken into membership in the Cuban Communist Party.

González has been with his companion Rosa Aurora Freijanes since 1990. He then undertook his special assignment in the United States. "We had to go through endless red tape to marry in prison," said Freijanes in *Letters of Love and Hope*, a book of correspondence between the Cuban Five and their families.

In the United States, González's main task was to keep CIA-trained counterrevolutionary Orlando Bosch under surveillance. Bosch, who still walks free in the streets of Miami, was implicated in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner over Barbados that killed all 73 passengers and crew members.

González's mother Magali Llort, who is also active as a revolutionary in Cuba, describes her son as "a typical Cuban." She says he is "a man with ideas that have made him consistent, and with a loyalty to his country for which I think we should always be thankful."

In the statement he read before the U.S. court just before being sentenced in December 2001, he accused the U.S. government of backing counterrevolutionary murderers who attack Cuba. "As long as the situation remains as I have described it, Cuba has a moral right to defend itself in the way that my comrades and I have done," he stated.

"I honestly was not surprised to see [Fernando's] attitude" on learning about his dignified conduct during the frame-up trial, said Bladimir La Rosa Vega, one of his fellow Angola combatants, in an interview in the Cuban press.

González is serving a 19-year sentence. He is currently locked up in the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Fernando González serving in Angola as an internationalist volunteer from 1987 to 1989.

René González Sehwerert

René González, 52, was born in Chicago on Aug. 13, 1956. Like Antonio Guerrero, he is a U.S. citizen. His parents, Cándido González, a union steelworker, and his mother Irma Sehwerert were active in the July 26 Movement among Cuban immigrant workers. After the 1959 revolutionary victory they remained in the United Stated to carry out work in defense of the revolution. In 1961 the family returned to Cuba, where René's parents became union leaders.

From an early age René González had wanted to become a pilot, but had to put off fulfilling his aspiration more than once when the call of duty intervened. After graduating from high school, as a cadre of the Union of Young Communists, he volunteered to work as a teacher in the countryside. As a U.S. citizen he was not required to enlist in the armed forces, but in 1974 he volunteered for military service. He completed it with high grades as a tank driver.

In 1977, on his way to flight school, he learned that his former tank unit was going to Angola to join the internationalist mission there. González decided to join them.

Speaking at a 2003 meeting with youth from the United States, his mother Irma reported that at first René "was turned down because he had just completed his military service. He said, 'I have to go to Angola.' So he hopped on his bike on a Friday afternoon, pedaled several kilometers to find the two officials who could give him the necessary forms and signatures. He got the signatures. And early on Monday he left for Angola." A gunner in a tank brigade, he served in Angola until 1979, and was decorated for bravery.

One of his fellow Angola combatants, Luis Nieves Otaño, later recounted that during their tour of duty, "the Cuban government publicly released the identities of several [Cuban state] security agents who had infiltrated the mafia-like groups based in the United States. After reading about it in a newspaper, we commented on the courage of those comrades, and I told René, 'You have the traits and the conditions to carry out such a mission.' He immediately replied, 'I hope so.'"

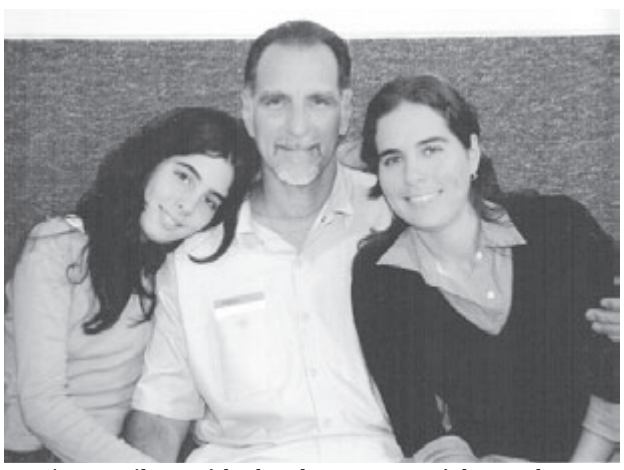
After his return from Angola, he finally completed his training as a pilot. He worked as a flight instructor until 1985, when he was designated squadron chief at the air base in San Nicolás de Bari. In 1990 he was accepted into membership in the Cuban Communist Party. That same year he accepted his next mission in defense of the revolution—this time in the United States.

In his statement to the U.S. court on his sentencing, he explained what the five were doing in Florida. "This issue of Cuban agents has a very simple solution: Leave Cuba alone. Do your job. Respect the sovereignty of the Cuban people," he said. "I would gladly say good-bye to every last spy who returns to the island. We have better things to do there, all of them a lot more constructive than watching the criminals who freely walk the streets of Miami."

René González is serving a 15-year sentence at the U.S. prison in Marianna, northern Florida.

René and his wife Olga Salanueva have two daughters, Irma, 24, and Ivette, 10. Salanueva, who was living with him in Miami at the time of his arrest in 1998, was deported to Cuba in 2000, her U.S. residency revoked. Since then she has been denied a U.S. visa to visit her husband.

(To be continued)



René González, with daughters Irma (right) and Ivette, during prison visit October 2008.

Write the five Cuban revolutionaries:

Gerardo Hernández, #58739-004, U.S.P. Victorville, P.O. Box 5500, Adelanto, CA 92301

Antonio Guerrero, #58741-004, U.S.P. Florence, P.O. Box 7000, Florence, CO 81226

Luis Medina (Ramón Labañino), #58734-004, U.S.P. McCreary, P.O. Box 3000, Pine Knot, KY 42635
(NOTE: the envelope must be addressed to "Luis Medina," but address the letter inside to Ramón)

Rubén Campa (Fernando González), #58733-004, FCI Terre Haute, P.O. Box 33, Terre Haute, IN 47808
(NOTE: the envelope must be addressed to "Rubén Campa," but address the letter inside to Fernando)

René González, #58738-004, FCI Marianna, P.O. Box 7007, Marianna, FL 32447-7007

Industrial working class at center of U.S. politics

The communist movement's response to labor's increasing political weight

The Socialist Workers Party is celebrating its unbroken communist continuity on the occasion of the 80-year anniversary of the Militant. *Marking this milestone, it has launched a nine-week $90,000 Party-Building Fund (see accompanying progress chart on the fund campaign). To promote this effort, we are running a series of articles that will highlight key chapters in the history of the fight to forge a revolutionary working-class leadership.*

BY BEN JOYCE

"Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class," explains the opening section of the *Communist Manifesto*, the founding document of the modern communist movement. That fact remains true today and is the foundation on which communists carry out political work more than 150 years after Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote the *Manifesto.*

The Socialist Workers Party acts on this basis today, centering its political work within the industrial working class and its organizations. Throughout its history the SWP has fought to maintain this proletarian orientation.

In 1919, working-class militants in the U.S. Socialist Party who rejected the pro-imperialist war stance of the SP leadership and were inspired instead by the 1917 Russian Revolution founded the Communist Party in the United States, with an eye towards emulating the Russian Revolution's example in this country. During its formative years, the CP was a revolutionary organization that attracted many of the best worker militants at the time.

Militant photos: Susan LaMont (above), Mike Dreyer (right)

Above: United Mine Workers of America rally to support striking miners in Carbo, Virginia, September 1989. Right: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 celebrates defeat of company attempts to decertify union at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, January 2008.

Counterrevolution in Soviet Union

By the mid-1920s, however, the wave of revolutionary upheavals in other countries that followed the Russian Revolution had been defeated. The worker Bolsheviks, forged in the party built by Vladimir Lenin, the central leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, were exhausted by the first world war and then the 1918–20 civil war. These objective conditions helped promote the growth of petty-bourgeois, bureaucratic layers in the Soviet government and Communist Party, led by Joseph Stalin, mainly concerned with guaranteeing their privileged positions and life style.

Stalin reversed Lenin's revolutionary internationalist course and replaced it with the narrow, nationalist perspective of the bureaucratic caste in the government and party. He imposed a change in the CPs around the world, transforming them from organizations seeking to carry out socialist revolutions to instruments of Soviet foreign policy, carrying out dictates from the Kremlin and working to pressure their own capitalist classes to accept Moscow's offer of collaboration to dampen workers' resistance.

A minority within the CPs fought to maintain a genuine Marxist course. They were eventually expelled. In the United States, they went on to form the Communist League.

The following decade brought much opportunity for the workers in the Communist League to recruit, as labor radicalized under the blows of the Great Depression. Up to this time the great mass of workers were unorganized. But beginning in 1933, millions of workers began participating in strikes and organizing drives across the country. The massive strike wave culminated in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1936, which became a social movement, pressing for government action to bring relief from depression conditions. This upsurge wrested major gains for the working class in the face of attacks from the bosses and their government.

Essential to the most important battles in the '30s was the leadership initiative of rank-and-file unionists who fought for independent working-class action. Revolutionary class-conscious leadership was decisive in some of the most successful battles, such as the Teamsters strikes in Minneapolis and subsequent organizing drive throughout the Upper Midwest, from which many of the best militants were recruited to the Communist League. (See "The 1930s Minneapolis Teamsters rebellion" in the October 20 *Militant*).

A series of fusions between the Communist League and other revolutionary-minded forces in the succeeding years led to the foundation of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. U.S. imperialism's drive toward war in the late 1930s precipitated a deep political fight within the SWP. A petty-bourgeois layer within the party bent to bourgeois pressure and rejected many of the party's longstanding Marxist principles. They abandoned defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and rejected fundamental norms of party organization.

This layer split from the party in early 1940. Though the split took a large number of members, the party emerged on a stronger proletarian footing. The record of this political fight is contained in the books *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon and *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky.

For the next few years the party continued to focus its work in the industrial union movement. But over the course of the following decades, industrial unions receded from their central place in politics. The failure of the union officialdom to mobilize labor in broader political struggles—to organize the unorganized in the South and elsewhere, or to fight for independent working-class politics—led to stagnation in the union movement.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the SWP concentrated its activity on the explosive social struggles by Black workers against segregation and on the openings presented by the Cuban Revolution. These were soon to be followed by the massive opposition to the war in Vietnam, the rise of the women's liberation movement, and other social and political struggles that attracted young people looking for an alternative to the capitalist system. Out of these movements many youth joined the communist movement.

Turn to industry

A turning point in working-class politics arrived with the 1974–75 economic recession, which was the deepest since 1937–38 and the first downturn since then that was worldwide in scope. This downward slide prompted the bosses and their government to qualitatively accelerate their attacks on workers' standard of living.

In light of this, the Socialist Workers Party prepared itself for the opportunities that would come with the inevitable working-class resistance that the ruling-class assaults would produce. In 1978, the SWP decided to initiate a turn to the industrial unions, organizing the big majority of its members and leaders to get jobs in industry and center their activity there and in the industrial unions. "Our turn has to do with what is changing in the American working class," states the report adopted by the party's 1979 convention. "When our kind of party has the opportunity to go to the weightiest and most powerfully organized sections of our class and do political work, we have to do it."

Since the party's turn to industry, the experience of the workers' movement has illustrated its correctness. While the sharp battles that will materialize in response to the assaults by the ruling class lie ahead, we can already see the signs of initial resistance as more and more workers seek to use union power to defend themselves from layoffs, speedup, lack of safety, and declining real wages. As the consequences of the capitalist economic and social crisis bear down harder, the most class-conscious workers will be won to the communist movement.

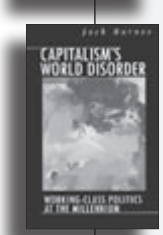
COMMUNIST CONTINUITY

Militant/John Sarge

Strikers picket in front of Detroit Metropolitan Airport against Eastern Airlines Aug. 1, 1989.

Communist continuity

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics
by Jack Barnes
A book that shows why only the working class can lead humanity out of the social crisis endemic to capitalism in its decline and how millions of workers will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all of society. **—$23**



Capitalism's World Disorder
by Jack Barnes
How the social devastation endemic to capitalism can be ended by the timely solidarity and united struggle of workers and farmers for state power. **—$23.95**

The Communist Manifesto
by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels
How workers *today* can use their power to change society to one based on human solidarity rather than profits. **—$5**

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$90,000 Socialist Workers Party Party-Building Fund

Fall 2008 ♦ Week 6 of 9

CITY	QUOTA	PAID	%
Newark, NJ*	**$3,900**	**$3,452**	**89%**
Twin Cities, MN**	**$6,600**	**$5,720**	**87%**
Des Moines, IA*	**$2,000**	**$1,631**	**82%**
Seattle*	**$7,000**	**$5,433**	**78%**
Washington, D.C.*	**$4,800**	**$3,635**	**76%**
Chicago*	**$9,000**	**$6,491**	**72%**
Houston	**$2,500**	**$1,795**	**72%**
San Francisco	**$13,000**	**$9,027**	**69%**
Los Angeles*	**$9,200**	**$6,250**	**68%**
Miami	$3,200	$2,007	63%
New York	$15,500	$9,331	60%
Atlanta	$8,500	$5,216	61%
Philadelphia	$3,500	$2,122	61%
Boston	$2,800	$1,515	54%
Other		$550	
Total	**$91,500**	**$64,174**	**70%**
Should be	**$90,000**	**$60,000**	**67%**

***raised goal, **raised goal twice**

‘Socialism in United States is no

New Venezuelan release of ‘Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Pos

The following remarks were presented by Mary-Alice Waters, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and president of Pathfinder Press, at a November 14 panel discussion held in Caracas during the fourth Venezuela International Book Fair. The panel celebrated publication of a Spanish-language edition of the pamphlet Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible? *by the Venezuelan publisher Monte Avila.*

The talk by Waters is copyright © 2008 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

Militant/Michael Baumann

From left: Erick Rangel, student at Central University of Venezuela in Caracas; Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press; Carolina Alvarez, editorial director of Monte Avila; and José González, president of the ALBA Cultural Fund, at launching of the Venezuela edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* at fourth Venezuela International Book Fair.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

First, a thank you to all the panelists for their remarks—to José [González] from the ALBA Cultural Fund, Erick [Rangel] from the national leadership team of the PSUV youth, and Carolina [Alvarez], editorial director of Monte Avila.

On behalf of Pathfinder Press, I above all want to express our appreciation to Monte Avila for the decision—as Carolina described—to publish *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* in not one but two editions for the 2008 Venezuela International Book Fair. One edition to be distributed free to book fair participants here tomorrow, and the other to be sold across the country over the coming year through the Librerías del Sur chain of bookstores.

I also want to thank CENAL, the National Book Center and organizer of the Venezuela International Book Fair, for the important initiative its national leadership took last year in organizing the fair’s Central Forum on the theme of “The United States: A possible revolution.” As you have already learned, that was the origin of the talk that is at the center of the booklet Pathfinder and Monte Avila are jointly presenting here.

It is not by accident that one of the leading daily newspapers in the United States, the *New York Times*, just this week disparagingly singled out that forum by name as an example of how divorced from reality all you here in Venezuela are. How divorced from reality *all* revolutionary-minded workers are, everywhere. That we should think such a ridiculous proposition worth discussing! That we should think events like the Venezuela International Book Fair, events that promote reading and culture and civil debate among working people, point the way forward for humanity.

As we said last year, however, the question of whether socialist revolution is possible in the U.S. is no small matter. Its “answer, in practice, will ultimately determine the future of humanity—or more accurately, perhaps, whether there *is* a future for humanity.”

A way to ‘manage’ capitalism?

What most struck me in rereading the pamphlet was the list of assumptions one would have to make to reach the conclusion that socialist revolution in the U.S. is *not* possible. And then thinking about what has transpired in the world in just one year’s time!

> “To reach that conclusion,” we said, you would have to believe that there won’t again be economic, financial, or social crises on the order of those that marked the first half of the twentieth century. That the ruling families of the imperialist world and their economic wizards have found a way to ‘manage’ capitalism so as to preclude shattering financial crises that could lead to something akin to the Great Depression. . . .
>
> You would have to be convinced that competition among the imperialist rivals, as well as between them and the more economically advanced semicolonial powers, is diminishing and that their profit rates…are now going to begin to rise. . . .

A year ago when we were discussing these questions here in Caracas, the main U.S. stock market index, just a few weeks earlier, had closed at its all-time high of a little over 14,000. Yesterday it swung wildly by almost a thousand points, from under 8,000—more than 40 percent below its peak—to close at almost 9,000. These manic fluctuations have become so much a daily occurrence as to become commonplace. And everyone knows they simply announce another plunge. Trillions of dollars of what Marx called “fictitious capital” have disappeared in the last year, and the bottom is nowhere in sight—*nowhere*.

What seemingly started as a capitalist crisis centered in credit and banking has now been revealed to be something of a very different dimension. As the de facto bankruptcy of General Motors bears witness, the deepest contraction of industrial production and employment since the opening decades of the last century is accelerating dramatically. And the inevitability of such a contraction has underlaid this worldwide crisis from the beginning.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the Great Depression of the 1930s wasn’t the consequence of the stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent banking crises alone. Its roots are found in the violently intensifying competition among capitalist powers in the years leading up to World War I—for colonial possessions, access to markets and raw materials, and inexpensive sources of labor to exploit—and the economic and social breakdowns and financial catastrophe that accompanied that bloody interimperialist slaughter and its aftermath. And it took the global carnage of the Second World War, with its massive physical destruction of capital across Europe and Asia from 1939 to 1945, to lay the basis for the exploiting classes to pull out of that crisis.

That is important. As Lenin stressed, there is no hopeless situation for capitalism. As the two decades from 1930 to 1950 proved once again, the finance capitalists, *if* they are not stopped beforehand, can dig themselves out of any crisis—by inflicting enough bloody defeats on the working classes and destroying enough of the world’s existing industrial capacity.

The only question is the price the toilers will be made to pay.

The only solution is taking the power to inflict these horrors—*state power*—out of their hands, once and for all.

The road forced upon us

Is that possible? That is, after all, the question we posed a year ago. And we made the point that revolutionary struggles by the toilers are not only inevitable, they will be initiated at first not by us, “but forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults of the propertied classes.”

The working class in massive numbers never enters on the road of revolutionary struggle lightly, or all at once. Workers sense the stakes, the sacrifices it will entail, the uncertainty. Our class in its majority exhausts other alternatives first, including alternatives to communist political leadership.

Within the United States and around the world, for example, illusions in the newly elected president of the greatest imperialist empire in history are enormous. But one must be blind to history to think that Barack Obama—now the chief executive–elect of what Marx and Engels called the “committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”—can or wants to do anything other than serve the interests of the U.S. ruling class. Of the propertied rulers who coldbloodedly selected him as the best man for the job right now.

Cover of the Monte *Socialist Revolution i*

Even before the new stage of the global retrenchment that is now accelerating, however, we have already seen, already been part of, the opening skirmishes of a fighting vanguard of the working class emerging in the United States. We saw this vanguard-in-becoming as millions of workers took to the streets of cities and towns across the country in 2006 and 2007 to demand the legalization of some 12 million immigrants whose documents the U.S. government does not recognize. They retook May Day as a fighting holiday of the working class.

We saw it earlier this year in the defi-

Militant/Jorge Lertora

Protesters march July 27 against immigration raid at Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa.

Recommended reading

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

by Mary-Alice Waters

“Not only is socialist revolution *possible*; revolutionary struggle is *inevitable*. It will be initiated at first not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults of the propertied classes. . . .

“What is not inevitable, however, is the outcome of these coming revolutionary struggles. That is where political clarity, organization, discipline, and the caliber of proletarian leadership become decisive.”

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ot only possible, but necessary’

sible?’ presented at 2008 Venezuela International Book Fair

ant response of workers across the Midwest—both immigrant and U.S.-born—to police raids on factories and homes, the roundups and deportations of thousands of workers, the criminal charges of “identity theft” brought against hundreds. That fighting response was captured most dramatically by the women, together with their children, who led the protest marches, proudly displaying the electronic police monitors shackled around their ankles. It was registered by the workers of all nationalities who joined them.

This is a working-class vanguard strengthened by its increasingly international character, by the traditions of struggle being added by workers from around the world to the longtime traditions of working-class battles in the United States itself. This is a working class that is slowly but surely learning in struggle the life-or-death necessity of fighting shoulder to shoulder—as well as how to do so.

e Avila edition of *Is in the U.S. Possible?*

The rapidly escalating economic and social crisis has only *barely begun* to be felt by working people, whether in the United States or internationally. While home foreclosures have been climbing over the past year, reaching more than one million in 2008 alone, it is only in the last months that the factory closings and layoffs have begun to accelerate.

Just last week the DHL courier service shut down domestic service in North America, resulting in the layoff of more than 7,000 workers in the industrial belt of southern Ohio, with spreading repercussions for working people from Cincinnati to Dayton to Columbus. General Motors and other automobile companies are pushing thousands onto the streets, and thousands more auto and auto parts workers all over the country, and indeed all over the world, will follow in the months ahead. Yahoo, the internet company, is laying off 10 percent of its workforce worldwide. Monster banks are slashing their workforces. And you can multiply those examples many-fold.

The majority—both in the United States and beyond, including here in Venezuela—still live with the grim hope that maybe the slump really won’t get so bad, perhaps its worst possibilities will bypass our lands. But world capitalism in crisis will not spare the most vulnerable.

A fight for political clarity

I want to close by emphasizing one point.

Our job today is above all a political one. While the class battles ahead of us are inevitable, their outcome is not. That depends on us. On our capacity to unflinchingly face the truth and speak with clarity to fellow combatants, to learn to rely on our own increasing class solidarity and unity in struggle. To understand, and help other vanguard fighters to understand, that the driving force of all history since the dawn of recorded time has been class struggle, not conspiracies. That the poisons of Jew-hatred and racism rob us of our ability to see that the real problem is the capitalist system itself, and that the real enemy we must defeat is the propertied classes whose wealth and power depend on that system.

Working people the world over are in for decades of intertwined economic, military, social, and political crises, and their accompanying explosive class battles. The period we are entering will be more akin to the years from the opening of the twentieth century through World War II than to anything any of us have lived through. The one thing we can be sure of is that our side, *our class*, will have more than one opportunity to alter the course of history in the only way we can—the way the workers and farmers of Cuba did it fifty years ago, and the way the working people of the tsarist empire did it four decades before.

That’s why the continuing example of the Cuban Revolution is so important today. And, I would add, it’s why the fight to free the five heroes of the Cuban Revolution—who, against their will and ours, have been serving on the front lines of the class struggle in the United States for more than ten years now—is an international battle of the first order.

Militant/Michael Baumann

Lively discussion follows panel presentation of Monte Avila edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* at fourth Venezuela book fair.

All these are among the real questions in front of us. For the opportunity to address them, and to join in the debate over them, both this year and last, we express our thanks, our respect, and our class solidarity.

Booklet on U.S. class struggle launched

Continued from front page

president Mary-Alice Waters at the forum’s first session.

More than 50 people attended the presentation of the pamphlet during this year’s book fair.

Beside Alvarez, the panelists were Erick Rangel, a student and member of the national leadership team of the JPSUV, the youth organization of the governing party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela; José González, the president of the ALBA Cultural Fund, a joint publishing project initiated by the Venezuelan and Cuban governments and now involving Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua as well; and Waters, the author of the pamphlet. The meeting—jointly sponsored by the two publishing houses—was chaired by Róger Calero for Pathfinder.

“This is the third book we have published in collaboration with Pathfinder,” Alvarez said. “It brings together the experiences of the Central Forum at last year’s book fair which focused precisely on the possibilities of making a socialist revolution in the United States.” Previous Spanish-language Pathfinder titles published by Monte Avila were *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, by Jack Barnes, and *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*.

Militant/Michael Baumann

Erick Rangel, member of national youth leadership team of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

José González, who chaired one of the sessions of the Central Forum last year, also recalled the importance of that event in his opening remarks.

“The rise of a socialist revolution is not just happenstance, something born out of a conjuncture,” González said, “It has to be a social process where objective and subjective conditions come together. The world is going through a very special conjuncture, one that can have unforeseen consequences,” he said.

Erick Rangel, who is a student at the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas, said when he first read *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* he was struck by the fact that a revolution in the United States “is not only possible, but necessary, because of the hardship, poverty, and affronts to dignity facing millions of people there.”

‘Potent force within labor’

Rangel noted the description of the demonstrations on May 1, 2006, and following years, “when immigrants and workers marched to demand their rights.” He said that it showed that “immigrants are a potent force within labor.”

He added that “the financial crisis shows that capitalism doesn’t have the political, social, or economic resources to sustain itself,” suggesting that it will “fall under its own weight.”

Waters said that in rereading the presentation made a year ago, what she found most striking was “the list of assumptions one would have to make to reach the conclusion that socialist revolution in the U.S. is *not* possible,” and then thinking about the deepening economic crisis that has unfolded in the last year.

Pointing to the fact that it took the global carnage of World War II, with its massive destruction of capital, to get out of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Waters called attention to the observation made by V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the Russian Revolution, that there is no hopeless situation for capitalism. Unless workers successfully take state power from their hands, the capitalists will recover. “The only question is the price the toilers will be made to pay,” she emphasized.

“We have already seen the opening skirmishes of a fighting vanguard of the working class” within the United States, Waters said, noting that this vanguard “is strengthened by its increasingly international character.” (See above for the full text of Waters’ remarks).

Questions about Obama

Hands shot up as the discussion period opened. Responding in part to remarks by several of the speakers, a student asked whether U.S. president-elect Barack Obama could lead a revolution in the United States. In her opening remarks Alvarez had said, “The idea that the North American people have voted for a revolutionary candidate is an illusion.” Waters had stated that Obama was “cold-bloodedly selected” by the U.S. rulers as “the best man for the job right now.” González had described Obama “as a symbol that a great majority of the people in the United States want change.”

“If you listen to Obama’s speeches,” said Rangel in answering the student, “you can see that his policies are not different from those of [defeated Republican candidate John] McCain. The important thing is struggle in the streets.”

“The two-party system of the Democrats and Republicans is the biggest political obstacle to independent working-class political consciousness and action in the United States,” said Waters.

When Alvarez said that in covering

Continued on page 11

How 1979–83 Grenada revolution uplifted workers

Below is an excerpt from Maurice Bishop Speaks, *one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for November. Bishop was the central leader of the March 1979 revolution in the Caribbean island of Grenada that brought a workers and farmers government to power. He became the nation's prime minister. The piece below is from a speech given by Bishop to an audience of more than 2,500 at Hunter College in New York City on June 5, 1983. In October of that year the revolutionary government was overthrown by a Stalinist-inspired coup led by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard. This betrayal, in which Bishop was murdered, opened the door to a U.S. military invasion that installed a pro-imperialist regime. Copyright © 1983 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

The youngest Centre for Popular Education (CPE) volunteer teacher, Lyndon Adams, with Maurice Bishop, prime minister of Grenada, behind him clapping in the early 1980s. CPE organized programs to eliminate illiteracy and make adult education classes available to all working people.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MAURICE BISHOP

As we struggle on the road towards creating a new man and a new woman, living a new life, in what we know will become a new civilization, the old culture, the old habits, the old prejudices are always there struggling against the shoots of the new. That is a struggle that we have to resolutely wage every single day of our lives.

But it is much easier for our people to make those sacrifices. It is much easier for them to accept the importance of doing these things which they have not been in the habit of doing, because now they know that for the first time material benefits are coming. Our people now understand that what they put out will come back, whether through free health care or free education or the number of jobs created.

With the free milk distribution program in our country last year, a small island like Grenada, 73,000 pounds of milk were distributed free every single month to over 50,000 people—nearly half of the population.

Last year, too, under the house repair program in our country, over 17,240 individuals benefited. Under this program, the poorest workers in our country are entitled to a loan to repair their houses, to fix the roofs, to fix the floors to make sure that rain does not fall on a child while he's trying to study. And after the materials are given to the worker, the worker then repays over six years at the rate of five dollars a month out of his wages.

If he had gone to a bank and knocked, let us say, on the door of Mr. Barclays, the first thing Mr. Barclays would ask him is, "Where is your collateral?" And maybe if he understand that big word, he put out his cutlass and say, "Look, no collateral." But even if he got past that word and he was able to find some collateral somehow or the other, there is still another hurdle that he'd have to go over. Because then he discovers that a loan could be only over one year. A $1,000 loan at 12.5 percent interest over twelve months would mean a monthly repayment of over $88 a month. That means that just about no agricultural worker would have been able to afford it.

And that is why today the agricultural workers understand what the revolution is about because they have felt the weight of the revolution.

The people understand that in all areas of their basic needs, attempts are being made to solve these problems. Two and a half million gallons more of water, pipe-borne water, are flowing into homes of our Grenadians at this time. Before the revolution, in many homes and in many parts of the country, pipes had actually rusted up because water had not passed there for years. The pipes just stayed there and corroded. The people understand what it means when electrification is brought to their village. The people understand what it means when they know that by the middle of next year we will have doubled the electricity output and capacity in our country, and therefore more people will have the possibility of using electricity.

Thirty percent of the lowest-paid workers in our country no longer pay any income tax at all. These workers take home all their money. Old-age pensioners had their pension increased by 10 percent last year and this year it is going up again by 12.5 percent. Our people know that last year some $43 million were spent on the international airport project alone, and another $40 million will be spent on that project this year again.

They know that last year over forty-nine miles of feeder roads were built—feeder roads being the roads that connect the farmers to the main roads—so now the produce can be brought out safely. They know that apart from these forty-nine miles of feeder roads, that fifteen miles of farm roads were built, and fourteen new miles of main roads were also built, totaling, therefore, something like seventy-eight new miles of roads in our country last year alone.

Our people, therefore, have a greater and deeper understanding of what the revolution means and what it has brought to them. They certainly understand very, very clearly that when some people attack us on the grounds of human rights, when some people attack us on the grounds of constituting a threat to the national security of other countries, our people understand that is foolishness. They know the real reason has to do with the fact of the revolution and the benefits that the revolution is bringing to the people of our country. The real reason for all of this hostility is because some perceive that what is happening in Grenada can lay the basis for a new socioeconomic and political path of development.

They give all kinds of reasons and excuses—some of them credible, some utter rubbish. We saw an interesting one recently in a secret report to the State Department. I want to tell you about that one, so you can reflect on it. That secret report made this point: that the Grenada revolution is in one sense even worse—I'm using their language—than the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions because the people of Grenada and the leadership of Grenada speak English, and therefore can communicate directly with the people of the United States. [*Applause*]

November BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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EDITORIAL

Justice for Marcelo Lucero!

Working people should join with the thousands who turned out November 14 to protest the murder of Ecuadoran immigrant Marcelo Lucero in Patchogue, New York, and demand that his killers be prosecuted and brought to justice. The protest is an example for all working people.

Lucero was stabbed to death by a racist gang that thought it could attack immigrants with impunity. The outrageous anti-immigrant laws and statements made by the Suffolk County government created an atmosphere that made the killing possible; their repeatedly turning a blind eye to previous anti-immigrant assaults made it inevitable.

The local laws, such as barring landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants and restrictions on where day laborers may gather for work, flow from measures taken by the federal government.

Increased factory raids, trumped-up charges of "identity" theft against undocumented workers, the building of a fortified wall along the U.S-Mexico border, and the hiring of more immigration cops have been implemented with bipartisan support from both Democrats and Republicans.

As the economic crisis heats up there will be more attempts to scapegoat immigrants. To hide the fact that capitalism is the real culprit for unemployment, factory closings, and cutbacks in social services, the capitalist class and its politicians in Washington try to convince working people that immigrants are "stealing American jobs" and draining off needed resources.

Opposing raids, deportations, and anti-immigrant laws is a life-or-death question for the trade unions. More unions should follow the example of Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union, which joined the November 14 protest.

Opposing attacks on immigrants will also put us in a better position to fight against the biggest division working people face: that between the employed and unemployed. To combat that we need to demand a massive public works program at union-scale wages and cutting the workweek with no cut in pay.

The thousands who protested in Patchogue show that the working class is not demoralized or beaten down. On the contrary, they are further proof of an emerging political vanguard being forged in today's struggle. A vanguard that refuses to postpone the struggle for workers rights, justice, and dignity no matter who is sitting in the White House or Congress.

Legalize all immigrant workers now! Stop the raids and deportations! Justice for Marcelo Lucero!

Booklet on U.S. class struggle launched

Continued from page 9

the U.S. elections the big-business media ignored all but the two big capitalist parties, and asked the U.S. participants on the panel to talk about the socialist alternative, Waters invited chairperson Calero, who was the Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 2008, to join the discussion.

"We presented a workers' alternative in the elections," said Calero. "The class character of the campaign was important; just having a third candidate is not enough. We got a hearing from thousands of working people and young people. And for us the campaign does not end on election day."

Conspiracy theories vs. science

When a participant asked for comment on conspiracy theories and other alternatives to a scientific view of history and politics, Alvarez noted that Monte Avila receives many manuscripts along those lines. "We need science, not talk of hidden forces," she said. "They don't go to the heart of the matter. We must offer scientific, historical explanations."

What would be the impact on Cuba and Venezuela of a successful socialist revolution in the United States? asked another participant.

González responded that the impact would be so great as to be almost unimaginable. "Cuba has faced 50 years of conflict with governments in the United States," he added, "but it's never been a conflict between the peoples of North America and Cuba."

"I think that a union of solidarity between the Venezuelan and U.S. peoples would bear fruit for both," added Alvarez, who had earlier paid tribute to Cuba for its example and the fighting spirit of its people, in spite of the difficulties they face. She pointed to Venezuela's links with Bolivia as an example of real, not sentimental, solidarity.

Such a victory would mean "a very big change," said Rangel. "It would be a change to a civilized world. It's what humanity needs."

Would the U.S. rulers give up power peacefully, given the military might of the armed forces in their state? asked another participant.

"The history of the U.S. class struggle is a very violent one," answered Waters. "And no ruling class ever cedes power peacefully. But the working class learns how to defend its strikes and its organization in the course of struggle. We have seen the revolutionary capacity of the working class in the United States to defend itself in massive struggles, like the battles in the 1930s to build an industrial union movement. And we will see that again," she noted.

"Through a socialist triumph in the United States workers and farmers there will place themselves and their enormous productive capacities on the side of all humanity's future."

As organizers of the next session moved into the meeting space, a number of participants stayed a while longer to continue the discussion with the speakers. Many held copies of Pathfinder's edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* It was the most popular item at the Pathfinder booth at the fair, with sales topping more than 250 copies.

LETTERS

Arlette Nixon

I want to point out what I thought was an omission in the photo caption for the article "Black workers and the fight for political power" in the November 17 *Militant*. The caption reads: "E.D. Nixon, center, speaks at a December 1965 Militant Labor Forum on the 10th anniversary of the Montgomery bus boycott, joined by his wife (left) and Farrell Dobbs (right).

If we are identifying everyone in a photo, I think we should give all of them names. This has a particular resonance if they are women.

The caption should have read "E.D. Nixon . . . joined by his wife Arlette Nixon (left) and Farrell Dobbs (right).

Janet Roth
Auckland, New Zealand

In reply—We agree. Thanks for pointing out this political error on our part.—*Editor*

Correction

The *Militant* omitted the name of Loretta Van Pelt from the list of Socialist Workers Party candidates published in the November 10 issue. Van Pelt was the SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Georgia's 3rd District.

Congo

Thanks for the article in the November 24 issue and editorial on the Congo, so useful in face of all the confusion the situation there creates. Just that the spelling of the French foreign minister's name is incorrect. It should be Bernard Kouchner.

Derek Jeffers
Paris, France

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

More cuts, layoffs

Continued from front page

more than 2,000 workers walked out at Lonmin's Limpopo platinum mine November 11, demanding increased pay to match wages at the company's other operations.

In Chile some 400,000 public workers conducted a two-day national strike November 11–12 to demand a 14.5 percent wage raise. The action was in response to rising inflation, which was nearly 10 percent over the past year.

Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said November 10 that Brazil and other South American countries "are in better condition to face the crisis than rich countries." However, in October bosses slashed 10,000 jobs in São Paulo, Brazil's most industrialized state. General Motors is temporarily shutting two of its three São Paulo plants and laying off some workers at the third plant. Stock prices in Brazil have plunged more than 50 percent since May.

Of growing concern to Washington is the political instability and working-class resistance U.S. rulers know they will face as economic conditions worsen. "Experts See Security Risks in Downturn: Global Financial Crisis May Fuel Instability and Weaken U.S. Defenses," headlined a November 15 *Washington Post* article. This "could weaken fragile governments in the world's most dangerous areas" and "threaten the survival of friendly regimes from Pakistan to the Middle East," the *Post* stated. In response, the capitalist rulers insist upon expanding funds for military and "intelligence" operations.

Street protests in China

With slowing exports, at least 67,000 factories in China have closed in the first half of the year, according to Chinese government statistics. Thousands of workers have taken to the streets to demand back pay. Until recently, the Chinese economy was growing at double-digit rates. Those rates are now plunging, with the annual growth rate increasing in October by 8.2 percent, down from 17.8 percent last March.

Japan, with the world's second-largest economy, saw its gross domestic product decline for two consecutive quarters and is now officially listed as being in a recession, as are Germany and Italy. Data released by the European Union November 14 show that the entire euro-zone economy is also in a recession.

Some layoffs are devastating whole towns in Canada and the United States. Blue Note Mining shut its zinc and lead mine in Bathurst, Canada, a town of 12,000 dependent on jobs at the mine. DHL ended U.S. domestic service, closing its distribution hub in Wilmington, Ohio. Out of the town's 12,000 residents, 7,000 no longer have employment. "Can a town go bankrupt, like Iceland?" one Wilmington man asked, according to Reuters. Ohio's unemployment rate is 7.2 percent, above the official national rate of 6.5 percent.

Bailout fund recast

A month and a half after Congress approved a $700 billion bank bailout fund to purchase "troubled mortgage assets," Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson announced November 12 that this program is being halted. Instead, it's being recast as a plan that would supposedly aid consumers.

Federal funds will now be available not just to banks but to insurance companies and other financial institutions that issue student, auto, and credit card loans. During the past month the federal government has already given nearly $300 billion to more than 40 banks and financial companies, including insurance giant American International Group.

The mayors of Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Atlanta have requested at least $50 billion of these funds.

In Atlanta, Mayor Shirley Franklin is seeking to institute a hiring freeze and a 10 percent reduction in wages and work hours for city workers from December through June.

In New York, Governor David Paterson is insisting on huge cuts in funds for health care and education and the reopening of union contracts. He wants state workers to give up a 3 percent raise due next year and to defer five days' pay this year, to be repaid when they retire. New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg is calling for eliminating 300 parks department jobs and closing 44 dental clinics.